

Route 67 News



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Our mission is to provide a world-class transportation experience that delights our customers and promotes a prosperous Missouri.

BIG NEWS: Project Awarded

The Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission awarded a contract in October to construct nearly 16 miles of additional lanes as part of the Route 67 upgrade to four lanes in Butler, Wayne and Madison Counties. The \$37,595,624 contract was awarded to Emery Sapp & Sons, Columbia, Mo.

The project includes four new lanes just south of Route E in Madison County for three miles and then constructing two additional lanes from there to the Wayne County line for the future four-lane Route 67. Because of a variety of factors including impacts to the environment and terrain, construction of the new lanes will alternate from one side of existing Route 67 to the other.

“The contract is scheduled to start this December,” says Resident Engineer Matt Malone, “but the contractor will likely try to get started early. The majority of the work involves constructing additional lanes, so there will be little or no traffic impacts.”

Malone says drivers may be affected during periods of lane connections as well as at equipment crossings. Motorists are urged to use caution in the area. Completion is anticipated in October 2010.

Nine previous contracts have been awarded as part of the 50-mile improvement project made possible after citizens of Poplar Bluff approved a sales tax in the April 2005 election to help fund the upgrade.

“In less than a year, the entire 50 miles will be under contract for completion,” says MoDOT Planning Manager Bill Robison. “That’s a remarkably aggressive schedule and a testament to the hard work of our project teams and all the agencies involved.”

Old Orchard Road Update

Bids are set to be accepted in early 2008 for a project to construct an interchange on Route 67 at Old Orchard Road.

Median crossovers at Old Orchard Road, Stormy Lane, McNail Road and Weible Road will be closed once the interchange is open. For construction purposes, some median crossovers may need to be closed before the project is complete.

Right-in, Right-out access at Old Orchard (southbound and northbound) will be closed at the completion of the project. Southbound access at Stormy Lane, Weible Road and McNail Road will be closed at the completion of the project, and limited northbound access will remain in place until an east outer road system is constructed.

Fairgrounds Interchange Completed

Elected officials and the public celebrated the much anticipated opening of the new Fairgrounds interchange at Route 67 in St. Francois County in early October.

“We heard a cry from the community more than 10 years ago wanting improvements,” said District Engineer Mark Shelton. “This is a safety project, and it gets us another step closer to an improved Route 67 in St. Francois County.”

The \$6,822,142 construction contract was expected to be completed by the end of the year; however, good weather allowed the contractor to wrap up the work almost three months ahead of schedule.

Once the interchange was opened to traffic, existing right-in, right-out access was closed, including Busenbark Lane, Hunt Road, Michael Lane, Holly Tree Lane as well entrances to Blackwell Motors, Hefner’s Furniture and the St. Francois County Fairgrounds.

A three-mile long service road from Red Rooster Road to Maple Street was completed as the first phase of the interchange project in a \$4,362,848 contract that was finished in 2005.



Route 67 Improvements Making A Difference



MoDOT and the communities along Route 67 in St. Francois County have been waging a war against median crossover accidents for a decade, and data shows they are winning.

“I’m very pleased to report since the Route 67 improvement projects have been constructed and median crossovers closed, there has been a 28 percent reduction in the number of accidents on Route 67 between Bonne Terre and Farmington,” says District Engineer Mark Shelton. “These are accident statistics we will be happy to see increase,” he says.

Shelton also wants drivers to know that median crossovers aren’t necessarily dangerous themselves.

“It all depends on the situation, location, and traffic volume. We have several corridors that successfully operate with median crossovers. In St. Francois County, we have an urban setting with several cities located along the route and much higher traffic volumes. The route outgrew the crossovers, and we must take steps to progress with that growth.”

In This Issue
67
news



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page

Big Contract
Awarded

page

Fairgrounds Opens

page

Future Of 67 South
of PB

page

Construction Update

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Study On Route 67 South Of Poplar Bluff

Representatives from throughout the Missouri Department of Transportation recently took the first step in an improvement plan for a more than four-mile section of Route 67 south of Poplar Bluff. The team conducted a value engineering study in late September to determine problems and find solutions along the four and a half mile section of Route 67 from south of the Poplar Bluff bypass to the Route 160/158/67 intersection. “What we know is that in recent years, this stretch of Route 67 has seen an increase in traffic growth,” says Project Manager Eric Krapf. “This study investigates what the needs are and the

best design to accomplish those needs.” Krapf says a value engineering study often starts with every possible idea and narrows to several recommendations as the team looks at a variety of factors including costs, right-of-way impacts, accident data, access issues, and much more. “We ask participants from different divisions and different districts within MoDOT to be part of the team so ‘fresh perspectives’ can be gained,” Krapf explains. “For this particular study we were fortunate enough to have Tom Lawson of the Route 67 Corporation take part.”

Krapf says the team’s goals were to address safety issues at the Route 67/160 intersection, improve traffic flow and capacity issues, minimize right-of-way impacts, and control budget. Any ideas developed from the VE study that address those goals but also reduce costs, increase the benefits or add value were considered. The team developed nine different plans and then studied the pros, cons, and costs for each plan. “We want to get the best design possible for improvements,” says Krapf. “But, that plan isn’t worth anything if we can’t afford to build it. That’s why finding the

best value to address the problems is imperative.” After the three-day long study was complete, the team had several recommendations to begin a more in-depth review. But, a plan is just the start. Funding is not currently secured for any improvements. MoDOT Planning Manager Bill Robison hopes that won’t soon be the case. “We prioritize our work with the regional planning commissions statewide,” he says. “We’ll meet later this year with the RPCs to review projects. This portion of Route 67 is certainly one of the projects our local RPCs rate as a high priority.”

67 Corridor & Utilities

We’ve discussed survey work and clearing jobs as well as updates on the design process in past issues. But, to construct new lanes of Route 67, there has to be a clear path. That’s often difficult when constructing in a location already populated with homes and utilities, creating work that is often another project in itself. While MoDOT has a right of way team dedicated to working with property owners, when it comes to working with utilities, its team is usually Marc Scheffel. Mark is District 10’s utilities engineer. He’s usually the one-man contact for MoDOT projects; however, with the enormous amount of work, utility companies, and project length on Route 67, two highway designers, Derek Fichtel and Mike Brandon, were recruited to help with utility work along the corridor. “My role is to help Mike and Derek in their work of getting the utilities clear. That involves going to meetings with the utilities, the field checks, run down answers when the utility companies or MoDOT’s design and right of way personnel have questions, and assist Mike and Derek with MoDOT’s procedures and policies related to utility adjustments,” Scheffel says. And, while he’s grateful for the additional help on such a large project, he says those weren’t the only changes in the process. “The length of the projects and accelerated pace has been different than any projects I’ve worked on before. We also had sections where we cleared the trees early, which really impressed the utility companies,” he says. Scheffel says ordinarily, utility work takes place on and off throughout the course of a project but in all, a highly impacted utility like the power lines on Route 67 can require about a half-year of work per project, with five different sections included in the 67 improvements.



Left to right: Mike Brandon, Marc Scheffel, & Derek Fichtel

“We usually notify utility companies around the preliminary plans stage, but in the case of Route 67, we met with the main utilities very early in the design of the project,” says Scheffel. “If there were going to be any show stoppers, we needed to know what they were up front.” Scheffel says the early meetings helped to emphasize how the project timelines hinged on clear utilities with the goal that utilities be out of the contractor’s way before the highway construction started. “For example, Black River Electric Cooperative has power lines along 67 from Fredericktown in Madison County to Route A in Wayne County. They will have power lines to relocate in Sections E, D and half of C. They were included in the early meetings, and later furnished preliminary plans to let us know where they might need us to acquire replacement easements. After right of way plans were developed, we gave them the updated plans. They started their design work and cost estimates, then submitted to us for approval. Once approved, we gave Black River a notice to proceed with relocation work. As the land becomes available through our right of way process, Black River is now able to schedule work to build its new lines and will then remove the existing lines to clear the way for our construction work,” explains Scheffel. Scheffel says he’s seen many MoDOT projects throughout his 22-year career, but he says Route 67 has been challenging and rewarding for all its uniqueness. “It’s been gratifying working with Mike and Derek on the projects, and to see the utility company personnel become invested in the projects,” he says.

Hwy 67 South Of MO?

Officials from Missouri and Arkansas interested in improving the Route 67 corridor met in Walnut Ridge, Ark., in September. The meeting served as an update of what was happening along the corridor now and what is hoped for the future. Missouri has plans underway to have Route 67 a four lane facility by 2012. In Arkansas, there are 50 miles between Walnut Ridge and Missouri that currently have no construction timeline.

Arkansas officials reported while a new portion of improvements to the Hoxie-Walnut Ridge bypass will begin next year, only environmental studies are underway north of Walnut Ridge. Limited funding plagues the project; however, the bright spot seemed to be the bi-partisan, bi-state support of the improvements and the hoped economic development a four-lane Route 67 will bring.

MHTC To Visit PB

The Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission will be bringing its regular monthly meeting to Southeast Missouri in December. The Commission has planned to host the last meeting of 2007 in Poplar Bluff on Wednesday, Dec. 12, at the Black River Coliseum. The meeting is open to the public; however, only scheduled presentations are allowed during the event. The Commission is a six-member bipartisan board that governs the Missouri Department of Transportation. Commission members are appointed for a six-year term by the governor and are confirmed by the Missouri Senate.



Members from left: David Gach, St. Joseph; Bill McKenna, Crystal City; Rudolph E. Farber, Neosho; Duane Michie, Hayti, vice chairman(seated); Mike Kehoe, Jefferson City; and James Anderson, Springfield, chairman.

Construction Update

Route 67 South
US67 South overlay - complete
US67 South, underseal and pavement stabilization - complete

Route 67 North
Section A earthwork - complete
Section A bridges over Black River and UP Railroad - complete
Section B clearing and demo - approximately 90 percent complete
Section B bridges, boxes, and minor earthwork - work just starting on earthwork and box culverts
Section B Windstream utility relocation - complete
Section B Ozark Border utility relocation - approximately 75 percent complete
Section C demo - not yet started
Section C clearing - anticipated start date is mid-November
Wappapello Bridge - approximately 90 percent of substructure complete, will begin super-structure (girder placement) mid-October
Stage I existing US67 rehab - not started Madison County work, Wayne Co work approximately 40 percent complete

